

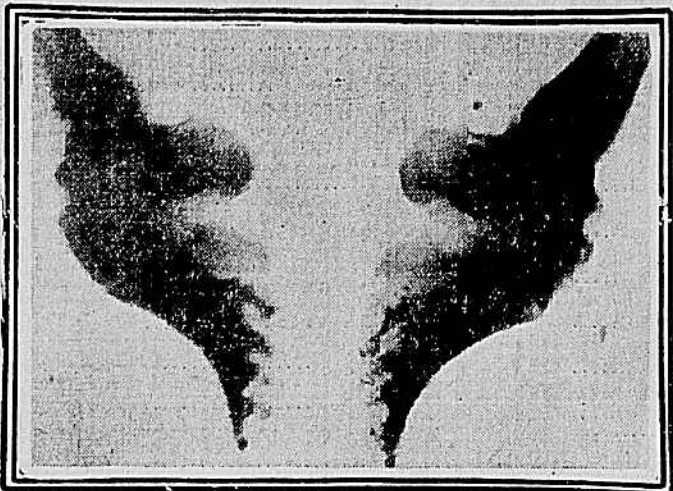
Small Foot to Go—Chinese Women Taking Off Bandages and Adopting Loose Shoes



THE FOUR SMALL TOES HAD ALMOST GROWN INTO THE SOLE.



A GOLDEN LILY WITH THE BANDAGES OFF.



X-RAY PHOTOGRAPH OF BOUND FOOT.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Nanking. The new woman promises to be a live figure in the future of China. Today she is practically a slave in the hands of her husband or father, with few rights that men are bound to respect. She is a cripple, hobbling about on bound feet. If she is rich and high-class, she is not allowed to go on the streets, and if poor she works in the fields and does all sorts of drudgery. The average Chinese girl is uneducated, and not one woman in a hundred can read and write. The new China is to be full of girls' schools, its girls' feet are to be allowed their natural growth and its women are to take their part in the work of the world. Girls are already employed in the telephone offices of Hongkong and Shanghai. They are teaching everywhere in the kindergartens and primary schools, and medical colleges have been established to fit them for trained nurses and doctors. The Viceroy of Wuchang has a school in which the boys and the girls study together, and the same is true of Tuan Fang, the Viceroy of Nanking. There are several large girls' schools in Peking, and one of the Manchurian princesses, a member of the imperial family, has established a girls' school in Mongolia. All the missionary establishments are now teaching girls, and the demand for educated women as wives is far greater than the supply.

The Anti-Footbinding Movement. The sentiment against binding the feet is very rapidly growing. The great Empress Dowager sent an edict shortly before her death denouncing the custom, and advising all the girls and women of the empire to do away with it. Chang Chi Tung has written an article on the subject, and before he died Li Hung Chang advised that the custom be discontinued. Many of the viceroys and governors have sent out proclamations favoring the abolition of footbinding, and a number of societies have been started in the different provinces in favor of the natural foot for all women. In all the girls' schools the government regulations provide that the pupils must come with their feet unbound, and a system of gymnastic exercises has been instituted which is impossible for a crippled-foot pupil. In talking last night with one of the high officials of Nanking, it was told that foot-binding would soon disappear, and that the sentiment against it is rapidly growing. The man I refer to was educated in the United States. Said he:

"I have two daughters, and one is nineteen years old. Neither have bound feet. The same is true of many well-to-do girls in my city, and especially so with the children of high officials all over the empire. The edict of the Empress Dowager had a wonderful effect. It has made the big foot respectable, and the ordinary Chinese parent will give up the custom as soon as he finds his daughters

can get husbands without it." I talked last night with a Chinese official, who is worth \$10,000,000 or more. He tells me that none of his women are binding their feet, and believes that the practice will gradually disappear.

The Big-Footed Manchu. As it is now footbinding is confined to the Chinese. The Manchus, who are the reigning family of this empire, have never bound their feet, and the great Empress Dowager and all the court ladies of Peking have feet which are less pinched than those of the average American belle. They wear shoes of silk and satin beautifully embroidered, and when they go visiting have gorgeous slippers with heels in the center of the sole about two inches high. The average Chinese woman has a naturally a beautiful foot, and the same is true of the Manchu. It is smaller than that of the Caucasian, and the instep is usually such that water could run under it without touching the skin. So far, I have seen none which corresponds with the old dark-key song about his sweetheart: "And de hollow oh her foot makes a hole in de ground."

The Chinese women were binding their feet when the Manchus came in, and the men then wore long hair all over their heads. The Manchus have always denounced it, and several of the Emperors of the past have tried to abolish it. The custom among the Chinese began, it is said, more than a thousand years ago, having been introduced by an Empress, who had goat's feet covered with hair and who bandaged them, and thus set the fashion. She clothed them in yellow satin and they came to be known as golden lilies, which is the term for the Celestial crippled foot—woolstock of today. Of course, the people did not know of the deformity. They thought the Empress had natural feet, and they bound up their children to make them like her. At any rate, the custom of the binding of the feet came into vogue, and to this day it is common.

How a Bound Foot Looks. No one who has not seen a golden lily with the bandages off can appreciate how one of these deformed Chinese feet looks. In the satin shoe embroidered with gay silk or silver and gold it is more like a stuffed club than a foot. The big toe only rests on the ground, and the size of the foot is measured by this rather than the full length of the foot. A know of one woman who has a foot so small that she can stand on a silver dollar and the sole will not come outside of the edges. The wife of one of the vic-



A MANCHU PRINCESS. The Manchus women do not bind their feet.

roys has feet an inch and a quarter long, and the favorite occupation of another has feet an inch long and half an inch wide. While the average bound foot is not over two inches in diameter where it rests on the ground. Taking off the bandages, one sees that the part of the foot which touches the ground is never more than the toe and the heel, and often only the toe. The binding is done so that the foot is crushed out of shape. The instep is thrown up and the toe and the heel tied together, while the other four toes are bent under the foot in the crack between them. It is very difficult to see a Chinese girl's foot unbound, but I once had the opportunity to examine one. It was in a hospital, and I posed as a consulting physician. The patient was a high-class girl of sixteen who had sprained her ankle, and she had taken off the bandages to allow the doctor to dress it. Her leg was not swollen, but the foot to me was a horrible sight.

The four small toes had almost grown into the sole and there was a crack about three inches deep where the heel and big toe came together. I could have slipped a silver dollar into that crack and the flesh would have hidden it. The skin over the instep was as rough as though it had been chafed with the cord, and it was cracked and sore. The girl's leg was bare half way to the knee. It looked like a pipstemo, or rather a baseball club. It had no calf, and the doctor told me that the small feet throw the muscles of that part of the leg into disuse, and that the leg below the knee is straight to the ankle. The sight of the bare foot is so disgusting that the women and girls are chary about showing their feet to the men of the family. Indeed, I am told that a husband rarely sees his wife's feet, although when husband and wife sleep in the same bed their heads rest at opposite ends of the cover.

Horror of Footbinding. The binding of the feet begins at different ages in different parts of China. In this part of the Yangtze Valley it is started at the age of four or five years. The little girl is taken on the lap of her mother and a professional footbinder wraps one foot and then the other round and round with a long piece of tape about half an inch wide. Before she begins she presses the four small toes down under the sole, and then takes a turn of the tape about the big toe at the joint. Fastening this, she stretches the tape

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back around the heel, pressing it downward so that the instep is thrown slightly up. The tape is next carried to the front of the foot, and the small toes bound so tightly that they are sunk into the flesh. The child cries during this operation, and when she keeps crying a great part of the time thereafter. Next a piece of stiff cloth is wrapped about the foot and fastened on with strong thread so tightly that the foot cannot grow. Tight-fitting shoes or slippers are then added, and over these more binding is put, so that the foot finally looks like a club.

As the child grows the bandages have to be made tighter and tighter, and the children must be punished to keep them from tearing them off. It is a common saying that every small foot has a hogshead with tears. I have heard of cruel mothers who keep a club beside them at night, and when they cry from the pain in their feet, but I doubt if this is the case except with the mothers-in-law, who have a bad reputation in China. Sometimes the girl hangs her legs over the edge of the wooden bedstead so as to stop the circulation, and thus ease it. If the binding is too tight the foot is liable to break in two at the instep, and the bones come through the flesh. Sometimes mortification sets in, and the toes drop off. I have known of women losing their feet by having them frozen, the lack of circulation preventing them from resisting the cold. At a Canton hospital which I visited some time ago a woman who had lost her feet in this way walked in on the stumps to be treated.

Can the Cripples Be Cured? One of the live questions which is now before the women of China is whether their feet can be cured. If they take off the bandages, the feet of the older women is impossible, although even they can be relieved of pain. Their deformed feet, however, cannot be made over again, and they must walk with canes or hobble to the end of their days. The feet of the younger women largely resume their natural shape, although they have none of the beauty of those which have not been bound. The unbinding has to be carefully done, and the feet must be rubbed and massaged to increase the circulation. It is difficult to persuade the women who have been binding their feet to stop, but the young girls are wild for the change, and that especially as it is now becoming fashionable to get a husband if one's foot is large.

Indeed, the big foot, or rather the unbound foot, is liable to be a beauty-catcher. As a Chinese official said to me, the men of the new regime are loathe to leave their wives about with them, and those who have a chance to travel abroad would like their company. This is not possible with the small-footed woman, who has often to wear a native man to have servants support her when she goes out from home.

Anti-Footbinding Societies. This movement against footbinding is being pushed by associations of native men and women in different parts of China. There is an organization in Canton, known as the No Foot-binding Society, to which 10,000 fathers belong. They have pledged themselves not to bind the feet of their daughters and not to object to their sons marrying girls with bound feet. Many of the wives of the members have taken off the bandages, and literature denouncing the custom is being distributed.

There is a similar organization in far western China on the borders of Tibet, and for some years past has been carried on at Shanghai. There is an Englishwoman of Shanghai who has done more perhaps for the female cripples of this nation than any native man or woman. I refer to Mrs. A. H. Little, who has written several excellent books upon China. It was she who originated the T'ian Tsu Hui Society, which advocates natural feet for the women of China. This was started about fifteen years ago, with branches all over the empire. It was supported by the missionary women and other foreigners, and it has distributed tracts, picturing the evils of the practice everywhere. It memorialized the throne, and was largely instrumental in getting the Empress Dowager to send out the big-foot edict. Among other pictures made by this society was the photograph of a bound foot by the X-ray process. This shows how horribly the foot is deformed, the bones being crushed out of shape.

Small Feet vs. Tight Waists. I have talked with many Chinese about the natural foot woman. The best of them deprecate the custom of foot-binding, and all say that it is bound to go. At the same time, they get even with me by denouncing the practice of lacing, so common among the women of the United States, saying that it is more so compresses the vital organs than the feet. They consider the small waist ugly, rather than beautiful, and say both customs have their foundation in depraved ideas of the beautiful. One Chinese remarked: "Our men have been accustomed to consider small feet beautiful. The women think the men like it, and that the girl who has a golden lily foot will have a better chance for marriage. Therefore they undergo the pain of binding. Your men think the wasp-like waist is beautiful, and therefore your women squeeze their bones by tying one end of the corset rope to a bedpost and pulling on the other in the proper place, it is tighter. You may call our people a nation of cripples because the better class of women have to hobble around on bound feet. From tight lacing your people are a nation of invalids. Three-fourths of your women are under the care of the doctors half the time, and that from the bad practice of lacing. I venture that on the average the Chinese woman is healthier than the American woman. Why do you not say at home and advocate an anti-waist-binding society, instead of coming over here to write about foot-binding?"

The Abolition of the Queue. Connected with the anti-foot-binding movement is another relating to the men. This is for the abolition of the queue. The high-class officials and the better element of the people are seriously discussing doing away with the pigtail. This was not favored by the old Empress Dowager. It was proposed to her in 1885, but she replied that no edict favoring it should be issued while she lived. Now that she is dead the question is again agitated and the queue will eventually go. Some of the schoolboys are already cutting off their hair, and there is a strong sentiment that this should be enforced in the army. The soldiers find their pigtails very inconvenient in warfare. They must be wrapped about the head and before going to battle, and the constant shaving and braiding necessary to keep them in order cannot be done during a campaign. Besides, in the case of a hand-to-hand fight the man who wears the queue is at a disadvantage, as he can be jerked this way and that by his enemy. The Chinese policemen now coil their queues like a snake inside their caps. They seriously impeded their attempts at arrest, and they want to get rid of them. It is the same with many of the leading statesmen. Said Mr. Cheng, the former adviser of one of the viceroys, to me: "I should like to see an edict for all officials to cut off their queues. I will tell you that many will go off the first day it comes, and that there are millions of other Chinese who will be glad to get it. We only keep them because it is according to the fashion and the law, and we shall be glad to see them go."

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the back and are gradually approaching the shape of our Western unmentionables.

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